

or objectionable, as in the case, related by Spurgeon, of the minister who celebrated the death of a quarrelsome deacon by a tirade from the words: 'And it came to pass that the beggar died.' Sometimes the text has been used, under special circumstances, to give a covert hit at a whole congregation. An anecdote illustrative of this is recorded of Dr. Paley, the well-known author of *Natural Theology, Evidences of Christianity*, and other once popular works. When Pitt, as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the age of twenty-three, revisited Cambridge, where he had graduated, Paley marked with a sarcastic eye how assiduously some of the leading members of the University courted the youthful Prime Minister, and made up to him in view of the good things which he would now have at his disposal. It was Paley's turn to preach before the University at St. Mary's on the Sunday following Pitt's visit; accordingly, he took for his text: 'There is a *lad* here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes,' adding, as he looked round on the crowded church, 'But what are they among so *many*?'

*

It sometimes happens that a text has a special application or appositeness of which the preacher is quite unaware; and the result of his malapropos selection is occasionally serious, at least for him. It was so in the case of a text selected on one occasion in the Chapel Royal at Dublin. Dr. Sheridan, the father of the better-known Richard Brinsley Sheridan, was asked by a country clergyman to take the duty for him on the next Sunday. Sheridan was in high favor at Dublin Castle, but he unconsciously forfeited all by his text on the occasion. He took an old sermon of which the text was, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' Unfortunately, it happened (which Sheridan had forgotten) to be the anniversary of the accession of the House of Hanover. The supposed insult to the authorities was never forgiven, and it is said lost the Doctor his bishopric. They could not think of bestowing one of their mitres on a head capable of even seeming to make such an application of the text.

*

But the latest and certainly not least entertaining story of the unexpected appositeness which may attach to a text which has been selected in all innocence is one which has been recently recorded by a writer in the *Occult Review*; and it is too good not to be handed on. 'A coincidence,' says the writer, 'caused some amusement at the time in connection with the church which my family used to attend. The rector there was the present Bishop of Liverpool (Dr. Chavasse). Mrs. Chavasse, it so happened, had had twins for the second time. The event had only just occurred, and the curate who preached the Sunday morning sermon had not been made acquainted with the fact. By an almost incredible coincidence he chose as his text the words, "Two are better than one," to the vast amusement of the congregation. Quite ignorant of what caused their merriment, the curate looked round, thinking that there was something amiss with the surplice, and finding nothing, proceeded to repeat the text in louder and clearer accents than before, which naturally only increased the general amusement.'

The 'Spectator' on Dr. Gasquet

In the old days when the *Spectator*, edited by Richard Holt Hutton, was a power in the land, it was conspicuous for its fair and even friendly attitude to things and questions Catholic. Hutton, who was so genuinely modest that he left a proviso in his will enjoining that on no account should anything but the barest paragraph be printed in the *Spectator* regarding him after his death, was certainly one of the greatest editors England has ever produced. Under his masterly direction and control the *Spectator* became the most influential paper in England—at least in the higher political and literary circles. Its views were regarded with profound respect even by those who differed from them; while the immediate followers of the paper drank in its every utterance as gospel. Hutton, who personally attended the 'Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England,' was a warm admirer of Newman; and Catholics have reason to be ever grateful

to his memory for the loyal way in which the *Spectator* stood by the great Oratorian in the days of trouble and persecution. After Hutton's death the *Spectator* fell somewhat from its high estate. In regard to matters Catholic, it became narrow and illiberal, and seemed to take a pleasure in girding at the Pope and the Catholic Church. Of late, however, there are gratifying signs of a return to the old spirit—a return which is notably exemplified in the paper's estimate of Dr. Gasquet's latest work, entitled *England Under the Old Religion, and Other Essays*. In his review of this volume the writer pays a fine tribute to Dr. Gasquet, and incidentally shows himself capable of taking a sane and scholarly attitude towards that much maligned period of English history, the Middle Ages. We quote some extracts from this interesting review as we find it in the *Spectator* of April 26. 'On closing such a book,' says the writer, 'as Dr. Gasquet's most recent work, the reviewer takes up his pen and his parable in fear and trembling. This is not so much because the Abbot-President of the English Benedictines is so minutely recondite in his book, nor even because most of the essays included are of a strongly controversial nature from the religious point of view. Controversial, of course, they are. One might relish, at a safe distance, some of the remarks which an extreme critic of the English Low Church faction might be inspired to write about some of them. Yet for the critic who does not approach his subject with a completely uninformed and strongly biassed mind there must always be a strong presumption in Dr. Gasquet's favor. He is, after all, a modern scholar to whom we are deeply indebted for knowledge of the Middle Ages. And he is scrupulously and eruditely accurate in all the statements which he makes and the evidence that he adduces. It is this accuracy that makes the reviewer nervous. Nor is the fear relieved by the final essay in this work, on 'Editing and Reviewing,' wherein Dr. Gasquet utters denunciations of critics "whose ambitions are greater than their qualifications to undertake editorial work."

*

'One is inclined,' continues the reviewer, 'to concentrate interest, for the most part, on the first essay of the book, which embodies a faithful and eloquent picture of the closing days of Dr. Gasquet's favorite period, the Middle Ages. In this essay we are on fairly safe ground. It would be difficult to read much that is controversial into its argument. On the contrary it is a contribution to historical research of the highest value, and fulfils a most valuable function. One must always welcome any authoritative work which is capable of correcting the appalling misconceptions current about the Middle Ages. There is no delusion which the Englishman of Radical tendencies hugs more closely to his bosom than a firm conviction of the miseries, injustices, and oppressions which he believes to have been inevitably typical of medieval days. One is thankful that Dr. Gasquet goes a long way towards dispelling this unhistoric illusion. "The essence of life in England during the days of the Plantagenets and Tudors," writes Dr. Gasquet, "was that everyone knew his neighbor, and that every one was his brother's keeper. My studies lead me to conclude that though there was hardship in this life, this hardship was a common lot, and that there was hope, more hope than superficial historians have conceived possible, and perhaps more variety than there is in the peasant's lot in our time." It is customary to discount the highly organised character of medieval life. Such a conclusion is an injustice. The guilds very largely fulfilled the function of modern trade unionism, and did their work not a whit the less effectively than their modern counterparts by reason of the fact that their energies were directed to the more secluded fields of trade protection and the relief of the poor, instead of the thorny paths of political agitation. Dr. Gasquet is emphatic in his treatment of the wholesale charges of corruption in Church and State urged against medieval society. That instances of such existed is undeniable, but, to quote the words of the late Mr. Brewer, "that the corruption was either so black or so general as party spirit would have us believe is contrary to all analogy and is unsupported by impartial and contemporary evidence."